

S E C R E T AMMAN 000909

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SUBJECT: JORDAN RESURRECTING BADR CORPS FOR POSSIBLE

DISPATCH TO PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

Classified By: CDA David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (S/NF) Security and military sources confirm that Jordan has decided to reconstitute the dormant Badr Corps, a Palestinian security force initially trained in Jordan in the 1990s, and currently resident in a training camp in the Zarqa area northeast of Amman. Palestinian Charge in Amman Atallah Khayri told local press on February 1 that King Abdullah had instructed authorities to provide necessary training for the force so that it can be deployed to the West Bank and Gaza Strip to supplement existing Palestinian security forces. Local Arabic daily al-Ghad reported on January 30 that the GOJ will provide three months of security training to volunteer recruits under the age of 25. Khayri mentioned that Jordan will also train Palestinian judicial officials.

¶2. (S/NF) The Badr Corps, affiliated with the Palestinian Liberation Army, received military training in Jordan in the 1990s. After Jordan and Israel signed their peace treaty in 1994, a number of the Corps' trained officers went to the West Bank to form the nucleus of the Palestinian Authority's security apparatus, according to military contacts. As the security situation worsened, the remainder of the unit was unable to follow these officers to the West Bank and Gaza. Since that time, members of the Corps -- which some estimates put as high as 1,000 -- have undergone occasional training at their camp in Zarqa, but have largely remained inactive, according to a General Intelligence Directorate (GID) official.

¶3. (S/NF) Under the new plan, the Jordanians will seek to increase the force to 2,000, according to the GID official. However, many details remain unclear, including what type of training will be offered, and which elements of the Jordanian security establishment will provide it. The GID official said he believed that the new program will focus on police training, most likely conducted by Jordan's Public Security Directorate (PSD). However, post PSD contacts -- currently playing a large role in the training of Iraqi police cadets -- tell us that they have not yet been directed to train the Badr Corps. The mechanism for recruitment in order to double the force, and what pool of candidates recruiters will draw from, also is not known.

¶4. (S/NF) The GOJ offer to enlarge and train this unit comes within the context of the Jordanian government's pledge to the Palestinian Authority -- most recently affirmed during the King's meeting with Abu Mazen in Amman on January 27 -- to support the new Palestinian leadership, including providing security training for Palestinian security personnel if requested. Jordanian Foreign Minister al-Mulki publicly raised the possibility of resurrecting the Badr Corps during an interview on January 31, but he ruled out the suggestion that Jordanian forces would conduct security training on Palestinian territory. Our GID contact says the decision to revitalize the Badr Corps has been closely coordinated with GID's Palestinian and Israeli counterparts, noting that intelligence director Sa'ad Kheir has been involved in the discussions.

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